



# HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

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## Northern Tier Backbone Soon To Be Operational

By Scott Bradford [sbradford@mt.gov](mailto:sbradford@mt.gov)

After some frustrating delays, rapid progress is now being made to fire-up the Northern Tier microwave backbone system in preparation for trunked radio testing. A microwave system coordination meeting held Tues., Aug. 19 resulted in the target of mid-September to have the primary east and west legs of the Northern Tier microwave system in operation. The exception is in extreme Northeast Montana, where ongoing tower construction will delay four microwave sites from coming online.

The meeting also resulted in clarification of contract issues and enhanced communication tracks that will be taken to expedite future work. Harris-Stratex is making good progress on system implementation in other regions of Montana, which are expected to go live soon.

## PSSB goes to Washington D.C.

By Chris Christensen [cchristensen@mt.gov](mailto:cchristensen@mt.gov)

Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB) representatives Pete Mohan and Chris Christensen went to Washington D.C. the week of August 11 to meet with various federal agency representatives affiliated with public safety communications, such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), National Guard Bureau, Dept. of Justice/Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Partnership for Interoperable Communications (FPIC), Dept. of Interior (DOI) and staff members from Senators Baucus and Tester's offices.

Victoria Velez Deputy Chief, Public Communications Outreach & Operations Division and former DHS official who has been very supportive of the Interoperability Montana (IM) Project, arranged for a meeting with members of the FCC Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau. Pete and Chris briefed them about the IM Project. They also provided a progress report to Tom Chirhart, DHS Program Manager in the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), and his staff. Tom has been a long-time supporter of the IM Project.

In addition, Pete and Chris met with the program manager from the Department of Justice COPS Office and discussed frequency coordination issues with Major Jolley and his staff at the National Guard Bureau. Jim Downes, FPIC Chair invited Pete and Chris to attend and present at an FPIC Interoperability Committee meeting. Jim has been an excellent source of information and coordination support for PSSB. James Wise of Senator Tester's staff and Scott Guenther of Senator Baucus' staff discussed federal agency involvement in the IM Project. Tim Quinn, Chief, Telecommunications Systems Division, Stuart Ott, Deputy Chief, Enterprise Infrastructure Division, and Chris Lewis, Public Safety Communications Program Manager of DOI were briefed on the progress of the project. A large part of the

discussion focused on how DOI could further assist the IM Project.

It was felt that the trip was beneficial in terms of assistance received, networking and coordination, and planning of future collaboration activities.

## Fallon County Commissioners Meeting

By Scott Bradford [sbradford@mt.gov](mailto:sbradford@mt.gov)

On Mon., Aug. 18, Interoperability Montana (IM) Project and PSSB representatives met with Fallon County Commissioners and Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) representatives in Baker to provide information about the status and progress of the IM Project, specifically in eastern Montana. Fallon County has submitted a letter informing the IM Project that it intends to withdraw from the Eastern Tier Consortium.

Very good, open discussion regarding the county's and IM Project concerns took place. Because of miscommunication and misunderstanding on both sides, the IM Project Directors and PSSB are committed to providing additional information to Eastern Tier counties, and have encouraged the Fallon County Commissioners to take an active role in the Eastern Tier Interoperability Consortium (ETIC).

## IM Finance Committee Meeting

By E. Wing Spooner [espooner@mt.gov](mailto:espooner@mt.gov)

Members of the IM Finance Committee met in Helena Wed., Aug. 20 for an all-day work session. Irene Bushnell, AZ, provided a summary of finances and reported that she has begun creating accounting procedures, travel expense reimbursement forms, and other documents that will be needed. These will be presented at the October Finance Committee meeting. Work is also beginning on a five-year budget. Irene presented a spreadsheet on IM Retreat expenses and sponsorship amounts. PSSB is paying for the expenses from a planning grant it has. Total expenses were substantially less than the original budget.

Bill Fleiner, IM Governance Chair, updated the group on the DHS sub-grantee status of the IM Project as well as work taking place with the Staffing Sub-Committee.

A bank account is now opened at Valley Bank, and the three persons authorized to sign on the account are IM Finance Committee Chair Sheriff John Walsh, Finance Officer Bill Fleiner, and IM Project Directors Chair, Alan Michaels. Any expenditure over \$5,000 will require two signatures. Irene explained the complete methodology for payments, reimbursement and accounting controls.

Scott Bradford, PSSB, reported that three submissions for the IM radio site build-out RFP have been reviewed and clarification on costs is taking place with the apparent winner. He also updated the group about small changes to the latest list of COPS 2007 subscriber unit recipients. Some price adjustments were



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needed to reflect current costs, radio options and accessories. Overall, the budget is still within approved amounts.

The group discussed pros and cons of having penalty language for contract performance in Statements of Work (SOW), and the IM Governance Committee is encouraged to explore different options for improving the performance of contracts through such items as penalties and incentives.

Considerable time was spent reviewing a comprehensive handout that outlined all DHS FY05 budgeted projects and illustrated the probability of work being completed and monies being spent on each project. A request for a FY05 funding extension will be sent out on Sept. 2.

Scott Bradford explained that CASM is a national inventory software that can be used as an assessment and management planning tool. Use of CASM is part of Montana's Statewide Plan. Members discussed the possibility of hiring a college intern to enter data about IM assets and frequencies.

A planning session is scheduled for next Tuesday to examine the BNSF contract beyond the initial five-year period. Bill also reported that he met with Montana Highway Patrol representatives who are interested in having an assessment performed to accurately determine projected maintenance needs on the IM System over the next five years. The IM Technical Committee will address this issue so a maintenance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) can be signed.

The next Finance Committee regular meeting is set for Mon., Sept. 8 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.

## **I-15/90 Corridor Consortium Meeting**

By E. Wing Spooner [espooner@mt.gov](mailto:espooner@mt.gov)

The I-15/90 Corridor Consortium met Thurs., Aug. 21 in Butte. Project Director Dave McPherson reported on the amendment that was made with FEMA on the consortium's fire grant.

Bob McWilliams gave the I-15/90 Technical Committee report and announced that Beaverhead County's frequency license was issued. Scott Bradford, PSSB, is working on obtaining additional frequencies for Red Mountain. The group discussed work that Sullway Construction is undertaking at Red Mountain to complete its contract. Motorola has been asked to do a "cold install" of trunking equipment at Red Mountain.

Members discussed compliance with FEMA Information Bulletin 271 on NEPAs. Tom Smith, Northrop Grumman, said that several 2008 sites are being sent out for engineering/environmental NEPA contract bids. He also reported that the results of the Lost Creek tower study have been received, and Harris-Stratex will be consulted about what size tower will work for microwave dishes needed at the site.

Bob reported on the most recent IM Finance and

Technical Committee meetings and said that the Northern Tier microwave system is expected to be complete by mid-Sept. He also reviewed the latest distribution list of COPS subscriber units and explained the request for an extension of FY05 DHS funding.

Dave McPherson reported that the IM Staffing Sub-Committee met and reduced the 25 Executive Director applicants to a pool of 11. The IM Project Directors will be interviewing finalists on Sept. 9.

Wing Spooner reported that a fleet mapping work session is planned for Sept. 22 in Great Falls. Bob said that he has invited Dale Osborne, Montana Highway Patrol, to attend the next I-15/90 consortium meeting in Butte and provide a high-level overview of fleet mapping and share examples of business practices.

The next consortium meeting is scheduled for Thurs., Sept. 18 at the Butte-Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce at 10:00 am.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

### **August 25**

Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) Consortium

Bozeman • 10:00 am

City Center Motel, 507 W Main St.

### **August 25**

IM Technical Committee (IMTC) Meeting

Helena • 9:00 am • State Capitol • Room 172

### **August 26 – Note: Meeting Cancelled**

Big Sky 11 Consortium

### **August 27**

Tri-County Consortium

Helena • 10:00 am

DOC Annex Conf. Rm.; Behind 515 N. Sanders St.

### **Sept. 8**

IM Finance Committee

Helena • 9:00 am - Noon

Anderson & ZurMuehlen • 828 Great Northern Blvd.

### **Sept. 8**

IM Governance Committee

Helena • Noon - 5:00 pm

DOC Annex Conf. Rm.; Behind 515 N. Sanders St.

### **Sept. 9**

IM Project Directors (IMPD) Meeting

Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • State Capitol, Room 152

### **Sept. 11**

Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC)

Helena • 10:00 am • Rm. 152 State Capitol

### **Sept. 11**

Northern Tier (NTIP)

Teleconference • 9:00 am

### **Sept. 17**

South Central Consortium (SCMIC)

Ennis • 10:00 am • Location to be Announced

### **Sept. 18**

I-15/90 Corridor Consortium

Butte • 10:00 am • Chamber of Commerce; 1000 George St.